

Congressional Task Force Formed

A congressional Delaware River Basin Task Force has been created in Washington, D. C., to provide a stronger link among congressional offices, federal and state agencies, and the commission.

The task force will seek to secure appropriations, authorizing legislation, and the administrative actions needed to advance important interstate watershed projects and programs.

The House Delaware River Basin Task Force is co-chaired by U.S. Reps. Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.), Robert Borski (D-Pa.), Michael Castle (R-Del.), and Rush Holt (D-N.J.). Seventeen other members of Congress have signed on. The House task force is hopeful a similar body will be established in the U.S. Senate.

The task force is an offshoot of the River Basin Washington Project (RBWP), created by the Northeast-Midwest Institute to help advance interstate watershed management within the Delaware, Susquehanna, and Potomac river basins. In particular, the project seeks to educate members of Congress about river basin issues and increase their legislative profile.

The RBWP works closely with the DRBC, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, and the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. House task forces also have been formed for the Susquehanna and Potomac commissions.

The RBWP has organized briefings on Capitol Hill and is compiling a database of basin-related projects and priorities. It will organize efforts to promote and acquire funding for these projects in Congress.

The Northeast-Midwest Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based, nonprofit and nonpartisan research organization formed in the mid-1970s, is dedicated to economic vitality, environmental quality, and regional equity for Northeast and Midwest states. It fulfills its mission by conducting research and analysis, developing and advancing innovative policy, providing evaluation of key federal programs, disseminating information, and highlighting sound economic and environmental technologies and practices.

Delaware River Basin Task Force co-chairs have hosted several briefings on issues of importance to the basin, including sessions on the effects of severe droughts, pollutant loadings to interstate water bodies, and the devastating financial impacts of floods. The task force currently is hosting a series of briefings at which federal agency personnel describe programs and projects important to the Delaware River Basin.

In addition to the co-chairs, the following members of Congress have joined the Delaware River Basin Task Force: Robert E. Andrews (D-N.J.), Frank A. LoBiondo (R-N.J.), Marge Roukema (R-N.J.), Jim Saxton (R-N.J.), Christopher Smith (R-N.J.), Robert A. Brady (D-Pa.), Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.), George W. Gekas (R-Pa.), James C. Greenwood (R-Pa.), Joseph M. Hoeffel (D-Pa.), Tim Holden (D-Pa.), Paul E. Kanjorski (D-Pa.), Don Sherwood (R-Pa.), Curt Weldon (R-Pa.), Benjamin A. Gilman (R-N.Y.), Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.), and John E. Sweeney (R-N.Y.).

VALUABLE INPUT

The commission established three additional advisory committees during the year 2000 in an effort to generate expert input on some priority topics.

They are the Information Management Advisory Committee, the Flood Advisory Committee, and the Monitoring Advisory Committee. The committees report to the commission, often sending along recommendations for action on various subjects.

The Information Management Advisory Committee is charged with developing a unified system of in-basin watershed information as envisioned in the *Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the Delaware Estuary* (1996) and the *Flowing Toward the Future: 21st Century Visions and Directions for the Delaware River and its Watersheds* (1999). It also is responsible for identifying basin-wide GIS coverages and making the information available at state GIS clearinghouses.

Members represent the basin states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and academia.

The Flood Advisory Committee was formed to provide a forum for coordination of flood loss reduction and promote efficient use of technical and financial resources for the benefit of the basin community.

Members represent various agencies with flood related duties in the four basin states as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Weather Service, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, county water resources agencies, hydroelectric and reservoir interests, New York City's Department of Environmental Protection, and the regulated community.

The Monitoring Advisory Committee is charged with reviewing monitoring activities related to water resources management, developing

recommendations for improved monitoring, enhancing coordination among monitoring parties, and assisting in the implementation of a comprehensive monitoring plan for the basin.

As with the other two committees, members include representatives from the four basin states, as well as staffers from EPA, the Corps, USGS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Park Service, agriculture, academia, the Delaware River Basin Fish & Wildlife Cooperative, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and the regulated community.

The commission's other advisory committees are the Flow Management Technical Advisory Committee, the Toxics Advisory Committee, the Water Management Advisory Committee, and the Water Quality Advisory Committee.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The commission hosted three "brown bag" lunches during the year 2000 in an effort to get out the word on important issues involving watershed management.

The sessions were held at the commission's offices in West Trenton and included the following presenters and topics:

TEXAS SENATE BILL I: An Experiment in Regional Integrated Water Resources Planning - Mike Personett, a consultant from Texas.

STORMWATER STRATEGIES: Community Responses to Runoff Pollution - George Aponte Clarke of the Natural Resources Defense Council

And on a more introspective note, Dave Goldberg, the commission's late chief council, and Dick Albert, then basin planner and local history buff, presented a fascinating look at a very unique government agency in a talk titled *The Delaware River Basin Commission - A Retrospective*.